



United States Mission to the OSCE

Plenary Statement

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Michael Guest
OSCE Review Conference
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One of my delegation members reminded me earlier this week of what U.S. President Gerald Ford said when he addressed the Helsinki summit in 1975. "History will judge this Conference not by what we say here today," he said, "but by what we do tomorrow - not by the promises we make, but by the promises we keep."

That, of course, is what this conference is about – taking a hard and honest look at how we are keeping our promises. In that sense, surely all of us can say that we've had some direct but useful conversations here. But what I appreciate is that most delegations and NGOs have joined in constructively pointing out issues that our community needs to resolve in the spirit of partnership. I trust that spirit will continue as we approach the Astana Summit.

We have discussed many issues and concerns here over the past days. I would like to stress a few.

We remain concerned about the situation in Kyrgyzstan, and hope that the parliamentary election this weekend will move the country forward on its road to a stable democracy. The events in Kyrgyzstan clearly demonstrate the instability that can result when a government lacks good governance, transparency, respect for human rights, and accountability. We urge the Kyrgyzstan authorities to investigate allegations of corruption and government complicity in acts of violence to hold officials accountable for their actions, to prevent any additional attacks against citizens in the south, including against ethnic Uzbeks, and to cease all arbitrary arrests and harassment of human rights activists and members of the media who try to assist victims or report abuses.

We regret that there has been no representation from the Government of Turkmenistan here. For our work to be effective, all participating States must engage fully in the process. We continue to have serious concerns about the lack of fundamental freedoms and human rights in Turkmenistan, including a lack of political pluralism, freedom of expression, freedom of media, freedom of religion, freedom of movement, and freedom of association. We once again urge the Government of Turkmenistan to open its country to international NGOs and allow the International Committee of the Red Cross access to its prisons, and we reiterate our call – which we have made for the past seven years – for Turkmenistan to provide information about those individuals arrested in connection with the events of November 2002 and to implement Turkmenistan's own domestic laws

which should have allowed access to their family members after five years of incarceration.

From today, the Review Conference really turns its focus to Astana. We have a shared interest in its success. All of us, I trust, want the OSCE to be an effective, relevant organization. This will require strengthening its ability to assist participating States in meeting ongoing challenges – some old, some new. We also join in wanting the OSCE to be able to respond efficiently and effectively to crises throughout the OSCE area, thereby strengthening our common security.

The Astana Summit, in our view, is a start, not an end. We want it to set a solid foundation for the OSCE's future work by providing not only a reaffirmation that our commitment to OSCE principles is firm, but a framework to guide our work going forward. The Summit also must face up to some of the difficulties and disagreements we've not yet resolved, including over the conflict in Georgia, that have reduced trust among us and damaged our common security. We need to work together to achieve a constructive plan for dealing with such issues.

With regard to the specifics of the Human Dimension that we've been discussing here in Warsaw, we believe that forward-looking recommendations from this Review Conference should include:

- Measures to improve implementation of existing commitments, to facilitate timely information exchange and provision of assistance, and to apply Helsinki principles and commitments clearly to the digital age;
- Strengthening the capacity of the Representative on Freedom of the Media to investigate media freedom issues and violence against journalists;
- Improving ODIHR's capacity to follow up on election monitoring and related recommendations;
- Enhancing our crisis response capacities so as to address emerging crises in a timely way;
- Exploring ways to increase OSCE's constructive interaction with our Central Asian partners in all three dimensions; and
- Extending OSCE engagement with and support for Afghanistan across all three dimensions.

As all of you know, my country has long stood for the value of civil society's participation in Helsinki-related events, and we've seen the value of that participation again here in Warsaw. Moderator, I will state again here our strong concern, and indeed, deep regret, that some civil society representatives were effectively denied the ability to participate in this Review Conference. That is not fair to them, nor is it right by the OSCE's rules, which, per Article IV, paragraph 16 of Helsinki Document 1992 establish a unique basis for denying registration of any individual or NGO. The consultative process must focus on that single point, and must be brought to a timely close on that basis. To allow a single state to effectively block participation otherwise would be injurious to our fundamental values and to the OSCE as an organization. We look to

Kazakhstan to ensure this rule is properly implemented for the upcoming Vienna and Astana portions of the Review Conference, as well as for the Astana Summit itself.

We are confident that our Chair-in-Office understands the importance of ensuring an environment in Astana that is conducive to civil society activity, in accordance with OSCE modalities and commitments. In that regard, we appreciate Deputy Foreign Minister Zhigalov's announcement, at the Opening Session, that Kazakhstan will support the convening of a civil society meeting on November 26, in advance of the Astana portion of the Review Conference. This, of course, is only one event within a broader context of civil society's contributions to the work of the OSCE. We learned, with many of you, about a parallel NGO conference being planned in Astana. We hope that those involved in planning this event will consult widely within the NGO community in order to provide recommendations that are broad-based and constructive to our work going forward.

Finally, I want to note the United States' strong appreciation of ODIHR's work. ODIHR is, of course, central to the OSCE's efforts to promote democratic institutions, fundamental freedoms and human rights, free and fair elections, and tolerance and non-discrimination. We believe it important that ODIHR remain both autonomous and impartial; that the same remain true of its election observation missions; and that we work together to ensure that its resources support its mandate.